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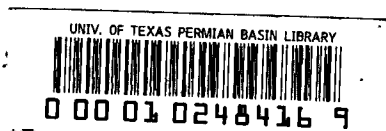
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Tennis and Perceptions of Choking

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TENNIS AND PERCEPTIONS OF CHOKING

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TENNIS AND PERCEPTIONS OF CHOKING

by

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RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT

Presented to the Faculty of Physical Education, College of Arts and Education

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Abstract

Mental fitness is important to performance just as physical fitness is. Mental strength is required to consistently perform at one's peak in the heat of competitive battle. While some athletes are able to withstand the pressures of competition, other athletes are not. This study examined whether Nideffer's (1976c) Test of Attentional and Interpersonal Style, Spielberger, Gorsuch and Lushene's (1970) Trait Anxiety Inventory, Rainer Martens' (1977) Sport Competition Anxiety Inventory, Scott and Pelliccioni's (1982) Choke Potential Test, and the Mental and Physical Disruptions Questionnaire, designed by the author, discriminated between tennis players who tended to fall apart under pressure and those who did not. The subjects were twenty-five tennis players on various college teams. The six attentional subscales of the Test of Attentional and Interpersonal Style (TAIS; Nideffer, 1976c), along with the Trait Anxiety Inventory (TAI; Spielberger et al., 1970), the Sport Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT; Martens, 1977), the Choke Potential Test (CPT; Scott and Pelliccioni, 1982) and the Mental and Physical Disruptions Questionnaire (MPDQ) were administered. The coaches classification of each athlete as a choker or non-choker and the athletes' self reports regarding falling apart under pressure were determined. For the purpose of this study, choking was defined as a decrement in performance, resulting from being over aroused or anxious, in tight, close situations. The data was analyzed by the stepwise discriminant analysis statistical procedures (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner and Bent, 1970). When using the coaches' perceptions as the independent variable, the MPDQ, CPT

(Scott and Pelliccioni, 1982) and BET (Nideffer, 1976c) were identified as the significant test items. These tests correctly classified 88% of the cases. When the athletes' perceptions were used as the independent variable, the MPDQ, TAI (Spielberger et al., 1970) and BIT (Nideffer, 1976c) were identified as the significant test items. These tests correctly classified 96% of the cases. For practical implications, coaches could administer the MPDQ, TAI (Spielberger et al., 1970) and BIT (Nideffer, 1976c) to their tennis players prior to the season to identify possible chokers. Once these individuals are identified the coaches could work with their players to help eliminate potential choking.